

River District Association 2024 Dream Launch, Ignite, and Rev-Up Information



Updated FAQ about Dream Launch, The Gauntlet, and Local Pitch Opportunities

- **Why did you stop offering the Dream Launch Bootcamp? Is it coming back?**

When the River District Association (RDA) began the program in 2019 we did not anticipate it running beyond one year. Thankfully we learned that the program filled a gap locally for a bootcamp-style program and were able to continue through 2024. Now that there are many other service providers in the area with specific expertise in providing education and support for both new and existing businesses (that also bring more resources) it makes more sense to partner than to duplicate services. As such, we will not be bringing the bootcamp back. But it does make way for new RDA programs and services to be announced in the future!

- **But what if I took the Dream Launch class in the past and want to pitch this year? Are we still able to do that?**

YES! Both Ignite with RDA and Rev-Up with the Danville/Pittsylvania Chamber of Commerce (DPCC) will still honor our offer to allow those that have taken the Dream Launch class and earned a certificate in years past to pitch without taking The Gauntlet Business Program. If you would like to pitch in The Gauntlet pitch program in addition to or instead of RDA Ignite and DPCC Rev-Up, you will be required to take The Gauntlet Business Program in 2025 to pitch in that competition, as that pitch is ran by The Advancement Foundation (TAF). More information on the pitch opportunities can be found in this document. But even if you have taken the Dream Launch Bootcamp, we encourage you to consider enrolling in The Gauntlet classes this year as it will offer more guidance and expertise.

- **Why did you choose to work with The Advancement Foundation to offer classes? Who are they?**

The decision to partner with TAF was based on their decade+ experience providing The Gauntlet Business Program for many Virginia communities successfully, and their program timeline mirrors the former Dream Launch program timeline. In addition, they bring a third pitch opportunity for those that take their program, they assign participants a mentor during classes, they offer a series of 10 classes instead of only 6, AND they provide additional opportunities to participants to deep dive into the content that was covered in class and personalize your business plans. Essentially, it is a richer and more expansive experience than what we can offer through the Dream Launch bootcamp and it is a proven, successful, and established program and organization. You can learn more about them at www.theadvancementfoundation.org



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- **The Advancement Foundation webpage shows a fee to take The Gauntlet classes, but Dream Launch was free. Will we have to pay to take the class?**

In working through the transition, we wanted to be very mindful of the change, so RDA has worked out a partnership agreement with TAF this year to make sure **anyone registered for the class with a Danville or Pittsylvania County ZIP Code will NOT pay for the class this year**; RDA is covering the expenses for the bootcamp this year only. If you would like to pitch in The Gauntlet pitch offered by TAF, they do charge a small fee, but Ignite and Rev-Up pitch opportunities will remain available at no cost to sign up and pitch in.

- **But what about next year? Will we have to pay to take the bootcamp in the future, or will there be a new partnership?**

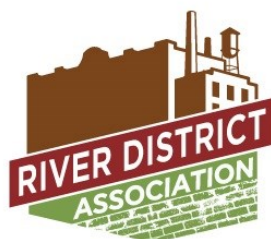
While no one can see into the future, we plan to promote all locally-available education programs next year, and work with all regional service providers that offer full workshops. Because these programs cost money to run, there are no classes available at this time at no cost. Thankfully several of the organizations will offer need-based scholarships, making the opportunity attainable for everyone. We were incredibly fortunate to offer Dream Launch bootcamp classes for free, but that is not sustainable long-term.

- **My interest in taking the class was mostly so I could be ready to pitch for funding. Will we still be able to pitch locally? Will the pitch opportunities still exist?**

YES! You will now have **three** opportunities in total to pitch your business if you take the Gauntlet business program, and our two local pitches are available for anyone that has a Dream Launch completion certificate from past years as well:

1) **River District Association Ignite Pitch:** RDA will still have the Ignite pitch in 2025, but there will be some pretty big changes to the Ignite program award structure this year, and Ignite may not take place every year moving forward. You will need to complete The Gauntlet program (or have a past Dream Launch Bootcamp certificate) to participate in the pitch; the **Ignite pitch is only open to businesses that want to open or expand a brick-and-mortar store location in the River District or North Main areas in the City of Danville**. Registration for the Ignite pitch will open in April, with the pitch in mid-May and grant awards in early June. More information on the new structure will be shared with all participants in mid-January prior to The Gauntlet class start date. There is no cost to pitch in Ignite, however you cannot pitch in both Rev-Up and Ignite, though you CAN pair either pitch with The Gauntlet pitch if you choose!

2) **Danville/Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce Rev-Up:** DPCC will continue to offer the Rev-Up Pitch opportunity, **open to businesses that are/will be located in the City of Danville or Pittsylvania County** outside of the River District and the North Main District. You will need to complete The Gauntlet program in 2025 (or have a past Dream Launch Bootcamp completion certificate) to participate in the Rev-Up pitch. Registration will open in April 2025. There is no cost to pitch in Rev-Up, however you cannot pitch in both Rev-Up and Ignite—though you CAN pair either pitch with The Gauntlet pitch if you choose!



3) The Gauntlet Pitch with The Advancement Foundation: The Gauntlet pitch will take place in April 2025; you will have to complete The Gauntlet Business Program to participate in the pitch. Dream Launch Certificates will NOT be accepted in lieu of the bootcamp for The Gauntlet pitch. There is a fee to participate in The Gauntlet pitch that is not covered by RDA, however you can pitch in The Gauntlet and either Ignite OR Rev-Up if you choose. Participants in The Gauntlet may open a business anywhere in the region and still be eligible for funding.

4) Other Pitch Opportunities: There are other great organizations servicing our region that have pitch opportunities and their own set of requirements to participate in their pitch (Rise, CIC, The Launch Place, etc); while we can't list all of them in this space, we will continue to share those opportunities as we become aware of them and encourage you to participate in as many as possible.

- **I do not live in Danville/Pittsylvania County, but I want to take The Gauntlet Business Program to pitch for my business. Will I need to pay for the classes, and can I still pitch?**
You will be able to pitch for any of the three no matter where you live if you are able to meet the individual requirements of each pitch, but you will be responsible for the fees to take the The Gauntlet bootcamp if you do not have a ZIP Code within Danville/Pittsylvania County.

- **If I take the bootcamp and pitch, does that guarantee me funding to open my business?**
No, it does not. The Gauntlet Business Program is completely separate from the pitch opportunities, and while you have to have the training to pitch at any of them, **you are not guaranteed funding.**

- **When are the classes, how do I register, and what if I need to miss a class?**
All information, registration, instruction, and attendance/homework tracking is managed by TAF for The Gauntlet Business Program. You can register and learn more at www.theadvancementfoundation.org

PLEASE NOTE: RDA or DPCC will NOT be able to answer specific questions about the The Gauntlet Business Program. To register, get information about bootcamp dates, requirements, and all other information please visit www.theadvancementfoundation.org

There will be a virtual information session about The Gauntlet Business Program and Pitch in early December, and a joint virtual information session about the RDA Ignite Pitch and the DPCC Rev-Up pitch will be available on Tuesday, January 14th at 5:30 via Zoom.

- **I am confused and have a lot of questions. Where can I go to get more information?**
You are welcome to contact Diana@riverdistrictassociation.com if you have general questions about why the switch was made or past Dream Launch certificates; for other questions:

- **For information about The Gauntlet Business Program and Pitch, visit www.theadvancementfoundation.org**
- **For information about the DPCC Rev-Up, please contact Christy@dpchamber.org**
- **For information about the Ignite Pitch, please contact Diana@riverdistrictassociation.com**

Special Thanks to all of our partners—The City of Danville, Danville Regional Foundation, Danville/Pittsylvania Chamber of Commerce, and The Advancement Foundation.

